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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO USLO PEKING

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NODIS

FOLLOWING REPEAT BANGKOK 26004 ACTION SECSTATE 13 DEC 75.

QUOTE

S E C R E T BANGKOK 26004

NODIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, TH, US, OVIP

SUBJ: ASSISTANT SECRETARY HABIB'S VISIT TO THAILAND

1. DURING HIS DECEMBER 12-13 VISIT TO THAILAND, ASSISTANT SECRETARY HABIB HAD A ONE-HOUR DISCUSSION WITH THE PRIME MINISTER ON THE PRESIDENT'S VISITS TO CHINA, INDONESIA AND MALAYSIA AS WELL AS CERTAIN MATTERS PERTAINING TO U.S.-THAI RELATIONS. ALSO PRESENT ON THE THAI SIDE WERE FOREIGN MINISTER CHATCHAI, MFA DIRECTOR GENERAL FOR POLITICAL AFFAIRS KOSON SINTHAWANON AND NOTE TAKERS. AMBASSADOR WHITEHOUSE AND DCM MASTERS ACCOMPANIED HABIB. THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY WAS ALSO ENTERTAINED TO LUNCH BY FOREIGN MINISTER CHATCHAI WITH SENIOR MFA OFFICIALS PRESENT AS WELL AS NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL SECRETARY GENERAL

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AIR MARSHAL SIT SAWETASILA AND DEPUTY DIRECTOR, INTERNAL SECURITY

OPERATIONS COMMAND, GENERAL SAIYUD KERDPHOL. THE DISCUSSION

DURING LUNCH IS REPORTED SEPARATELY.

2. IN HIS MEETING WITH PRIME MINISTER KHUKRIT, HABIB CONCENTRATED ON THE PEKING TALKS, PARTICULARLY THOSE ASPECTS OF INTEREST TO THAILAND. KHUKRIT FOLLOWED THE DISCUSSION CLOSELY AND THEN ZEROED IN ON THREE AREAS:

A. PRIME MINISTER KHUKRIT SAID HE HAD BEEN DEEPLY CONCERNED BY REPORTS REACHING HIM (SOURCE NOT IDENTIFIED) THAT THE UNITED STATES WAS IN THE PROCESS OF RETREATING TO AN "ISLAND STRATEGY." REFERRING TO THE PRESIDENT'S DECEMBER 7 HONOLULU SPEECH, ASSISTANT SECRETARY HABIB SAID THAT WE CONTINUE TO HAVE STRONG INTERESTS IN THE INDEPENDENCE AND SOVEREIGNTY OF ALL FREE NATIONS IN ASIA. WE HAVE NO INTENTION OF PULLING BACK TO ANY SORT OF ISLAND STRATEGY. THE PRIME MINISTER EXPRESSED HIS APPRECIATION FOR THIS REASSURANCE AND FOR THE UNDERSTANDING WE HAVE SHOWN TOWARD THAILAND DURING THESE DIFFICULT TIMES. THE PRIME MINISTER NOTED THAT THAILAND IS TRYING TO ORGANIZE ITSELF TO MEET THE NEW SITUATION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA. IT DEEPLY APPRECIATES THE UNDERSTANDING AND COOPERATION WHICH THE UNITED STATES HAS SHOWN. KHUKRIT SAID THAT AS FAR AS HE WAS CONCERNED, THERE WERE NO SIGNIFICANT PROBLEMS IN U.S.-THAI RELATIONS. REFERRING SPECIFICALLY TO THE PRESIDENT'S SPEECH, WITH WHICH HE WAS OBVIOUSLY CLOSELY FAMILIAR, KHUKRIT SAID HE WAS PARTICULARLY PLEASED WITH THE FIRST PREMISE OF THE NEW PACIFIC DOCTRINE CONCERNING AMERICAN STRENGTH AND THE FOURTH DEALING WITH OUR CONTINUED STAKE IN SEA.

B. KHUKRIT WAS PARTICULARLY PLEASED TO LEARN THAT CHINA IS NOW CONCERNED ABOUT HANOI'S ROLE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA. KHUKRIT SAID HE AND HIS COLLEAGUES MADE A MAJOR EFFORT DURING THEIR JULY VISIT TO PEKING TO GET THE CHINESE TO AGREE THAT NORTH VIETNAM WAS THE EMERGING THREAT TO STABILITY IN SOUTHEAST ASIA. INITIALLY CHINA HELD FAST TO THE LINE THAT ONLY THE UNITED STATES AND THE SOVIET UNION WERE CAPABLE OF EXERCISING HEGEMONY OVER AREAS OUTSIDE THEIR BORDERS. TOWARD THE END OF THE VISIT THE CHINESE FINALLY AGREED THAT OTHERS MIGHT HAVE THIS CAPABILITY BUT THEY CITED INDIA AS THE ONLY

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ADDITIONAL POSSIBILITY (*). KHUKRIT SAID THAT AT THAT TIME THE CHINESE WERE NOT CONCERNED ABOUT THE PRESENCE OF NORTH VIETNAMESE FORCES IN LAOS NOR THE STATE OF THAI-LAO RELATIONS. THE CHINESE WERE, HOWEVER, MOST INTERESTED IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF BETTER RELATIONS BETWEEN THAILAND AND CAMBODIA. KHUKRIT SAID THAT AS A RESULT OF THESE DISCUSSIONS, THE PRC "TIED UP IENG SARY WITH A BLUE RIBBON AND PRESENTED HIM TO US ON A PLATTER." THE PRIME MINISTER EXPRESSED HIS SATISFACTION WITH THE WAY

THAI-CAMBODIAN RELATIONS WERE DEVELOPING.

C. TURNING TO LAOS, KHUKRIT SAID THAT THAILAND WAS DEEPLY CONCERNED ABOUT THE SITUATION ACROSS THE MEKONG BUT WOULD REMAIN CALM AND COOL. IT WOULD HOWEVER KEEP THE FRONTIER CLOSED SO THAT "NO GRAIN OF RICE AND NO DROP OF OIL" WOULD GO TO LAOS THROUGH THAILAND UNTIL THEY BECOME MORE REASONABLE. KHUKRIT SAID HE HAD RECEIVED A "SWEET" LETTER FROM THE NEW LAO GOVERNMENT THE PREVIOUS DAY AND HE BELIEVES THE LAO ARE BECOMING MORE PEACEFUL. HABIB SAID THAT WE PLAN TO MAINTAIN AN EMBASSY IN LAOS AS LONG AS THE LAO PERMIT THAT EMBASSY TO FUNCTION EFFECTIVELY. THERE WILL BE NO AID TO LAOS AT THIS TIME. WE WANT TO SEE HOW THE LAO GOVERNMENT BEHAVES, INCLUDING HOW IT BEHAVES TOWARD THAILAND. THE PRIME MINISTER EXPRESSED HIS APPRECIATION FOR THIS POSITION.

3. HABIB TOLD PRIME MINISTER KHUKRIT AND CHATCHAI THAT SECRETARY KISSINGER HAD MADE TO THE CHINESE THE POINT DISCUSSED DURING THE NOVEMBER 26 WASHINGTON LUNCHEON THAT IT WOULD BE USEFUL FOR THE CHINESE TO EXPAND THEIR INTEREST IN LAOS AND CAMBODIA (PARA 2 STATE 282411). HE ASKED CHATCHAI WHETHER HE HAD YET MENTIONED TO CAMBODIAN OFFICIALS THAT WE BEAR NO HOSTILITY TOWARD THEM (PARA 3 STATE 282411). CHATCHAI SAID HE HAD PASSED THIS MESSAGE AND THAT HE WOULD PURSUE THIS FURTHER LATER IN THE MONTH WHEN HE SEES IENG SARY ON KONG ISLAND. HE PROMISED TO LET US KNOW THE CAMBODIAN RESPONSE. (COMMENT: THERE HAS BEEN NO HIGH-LEVEL CONTACT BETWEEN THE THAI AND CAMBODIANS SINCE CHATCHAI RETURNED. THIS FACT PLUS CHATCHAI'S MANNER IN ANSWERING THE QUESTION LEAD US TO DOUBT THAT HE HAS ACTUALLY PASSED THE MESSAGE AS YET. WE BELIEVE HE WILL DO SO THE NEXT TIME HE SEES IENG SARY.)

4. PICKING UP A SUGGESTION MARSHAL SIT MADE DURING LUNCH,
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HABIB ALSO MENTIONED TO KHUKRIT THAT PRIME MINISTER RAZAK HAD EXPRESSED HIS CONCERN ABOUT THE SITUATION ON THE THAI-MALAYSIAN BORDER. HABIB SAID THAT RAZAK HAD STRESSED THE NEED FOR MORE COOPERATION IN MEETING THE SECURITY THREAT ALONG THE BORDER. KHUKRIT TOOK THIS IN BUT MADE NO COMMENT. SEPARATE DISCUSSIONS WITH SENIOR MFA OFFICIALS INDICATED THAT THEY BELIEVE MALAYSIA IS CONCERNED ONLY ABOUT THE PROBLEM OF COMMUNIST INSURGENTS OPERATING ALONG THE BORDER, WHILE THESE OFFICIALS SAID THAILAND BELIEVES PRIORITY MUST ALSO BE GIVEN TO THE PROBLEM OF MUSLIM SEPARATISTS IN SOUTH THAILAND (AND PRESUMABLY OUTSIDE SUPPORT FOR THEM). THE MFA OFFICIALS SAID THEY HOPED TO DISCUSS THESE DIFFERING PRIORITIES WITH RAZAK. DURING THIS DISCUSSION OF MALAYSIA, HABIB TOLD KHUKRIT AND CHATCHAI THAT WE WOULD BE MAKING SOME MILITARY EQUIPMENT AVAILABLE TO MALAYSIA ON A SALES BASIS. THEY MADE NO COMMENT.

5. COMMENT. THE THAI WERE OBVIOUSLY PLEASED THAT A SENIOR U.S. OFFICIAL CAME TO BANGKOK TO BRIEF THEM ON DISCUSSIONS IN PEKING IN WHICH THE THAI HAVE AN INTEREST. TIMING FOR THE VISIT WAS PARTICULARLY USEFUL IN LIGHT OF THAI CONCERN THAT THE PRESIDENT'S VISITS TO INDONESIA AND THE PHILIPPINES, EXCLUDING ANY MAINLAND SOUTHEAST ASIAN COUNTRIES, MIGHT, AS KHUKRIT PUT IT, SIGNAL A U.S. POLICY SHIFT. AS NOTED ABOVE, LAOS FIGURED PROMINENTLY IN THE DISCUSSIONS AND OBVIOUSLY HAS AN IMPACT ON THAI SECURITY THINKING AT THIS POINT. SOME THAI NEWSPAPERS REPORTED ON DECEMBER 13 THAT HABIB TOLD THE THAI THAT THE U.S. WILL SEND AN AMBASSADOR TO VIETNAME. THIS POSSIBILITY WAS NOT MENTIONED IN ANY WAY DURING HABIB'S DISCUSSIONS.

6. DEPARTMENT MAY WISH TO PASS THIS MESSAGE TO KUALA LUMPUR, JAKARTA, MANILA, SINGAPORE AND VIENTIANE.
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KISSINGER

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NNN

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